



Approved For Release 2002/09/05 : CIA-RDP74B00681R000100040009-9

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

ER-71-1100

71-1752

6 APR 1971

S-1087/DE

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Production of National Intelligence Estimates  
on Soviet Forces ☐

1. ☐ The production of the current series of Soviet military estimates (NIEs 11-3, 11-8, and 11-14) has been unusually protracted and difficult, requiring an exceedingly heavy investment in man-hours by all elements of the intelligence community. Unfortunately, the results of this effort have not been satisfactory; all three estimates have slipped badly, and the trend appears to be toward ever greater delay. NIE 11-8-70: "Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Attack," scheduled for early September 1970, was approved by the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) on 24 November 1970. NIE 11-3-71: "Soviet Strategic Defenses," scheduled for early October 1970, was approved by the USIB on 25 February 1971, a delay of more than four months. NIE 11-14-71: "Soviet Forces for Operations in Eurasia," which was originally scheduled for early November, is now scheduled for May, a delay of six months.

2. ☐ These delays have caused major difficulties within the Department of Defense, which is the prime user of these estimates. Key Defense planning and policy documents have been delayed, and a number of them have had to be prepared without benefit of national intelligence inputs. The impact has been particularly serious in the following areas:

a. The intelligence support for Joint Staff basic plans (JSOP, JSCP, and JLRSS), which is in the form of the Joint Intelligence Estimate for Planning (JIEP), had to be provided prior to publication of the pertinent NIEs.

b. Production of the Defense Intelligence Projections for Planning (DIPP), which are based on the Soviet military NIEs, has been seriously delayed and considerable additional staff work has been required as the result of the prolonged NIE process. For example, Section 11 of the DIPP had been

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drafted and coordinated within the DoD by 15 November 1970; because of the delay in NIE 11-3, we have recently had to repeat much of this process, which involves numerous DIA-NSA-Service working groups.



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3. ☐ I am, of course, concerned about the difficulties that this situation has generated within DIA. I am more concerned, however, by the difficulties it has caused our consumers and by their understandably critical reaction. I am sure that you, as Director of Central Intelligence, share my concern. The delays in the military estimates are not peculiarly a DIA problem, but a problem for the US intelligence community, and a pressing one. In my view, it is not too early for us to search for the causes underlying this year's late performance, and to consider the remedial action necessary to prevent its recurrence.

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4. ☐ The principal cause appears to have been procedural in nature. As I understand it, the drafting of the Soviet military estimates this year was done, not by the Office of National Estimates (ONE) as in the past, but by a task force comprised of representatives of the various production elements in CIA. Whatever the merits of this approach, its effect has been to add yet another layer onto the already cumbersome procedure of producing NIEs. For the next round of the military estimates, I propose a new approach which instead of adding a layer would remove one.

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5. ☐ Considering the key importance of the Soviet military estimates to DoD planning and policy, DIA has a larger stake than other USIB members in their timely production. With the recent formation of a Directorate for Estimates, DIA is now in a position to assume a responsibility commensurate with its interest. I propose that DIA be given responsibility for producing the initial drafts of the major Soviet military estimates, i.e. those in the 11-8, 11-3, and 11-14 series.

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6. ☐ This approach would involve no basic change in procedures beyond the transfer of drafting responsibilities from the CIA task forces to DIA. The Board of National Estimates would draft and coordinate the terms of reference and call for contributions from the USIB agencies and sub-committees, which DIA would use in preparing its draft. The BNE would oversee formal coordination of these estimates, issue subsequent drafts, and approve the final draft for consideration by the USIB.

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7. ☐ I believe that this step would result in a considerable saving in man-hours by all the intelligence agencies who participate in producing the Soviet military estimates, but the saving should be especially marked in DIA and CIA. The production of a first draft by DIA would require little more effort than is now expended in preparing a contribution, and we would be spared the considerable extra effort that goes into reviewing a first draft produced elsewhere. CIA's production elements would be relieved of the additional workload that drafting this year's estimates has entailed, which I understand to be considerable. Moreover, DIA could accomplish preliminary coordination with NSA and the Services as it now does with the DIPP and the Defense Intelligence Estimates. Thus, hopefully, the first draft would be a coordinated DoD draft, which would contain statements of differing views. This should save many hours in the formal coordination process chaired by the BNE.

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8. ☐ Apart from the saving in man-hours, I believe that this proposal has other important advantages. It gives DIA sufficient control of the production schedule to ensure that the military estimates will fit into the planning and budgetary cycles of their prime users in the DoD. It is in consonance with NSCID No. 3 which states that "The Department of Defense shall produce military intelligence," and with NSCID No. 1 which provides that departmental intelligence may, when appropriate, be submitted through the USIB for issuance as national intelligence by the DCI. It is also in the spirit of the DCIDs which enjoin all agencies to avoid overlapping the primary responsibilities of other agencies.

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9. ☐ A secondary cause of delay is the inclusion of masses of detail in this year's military NIEs, which has further complicated and lengthened the drafting and coordination process. Even printing these bulky documents has delayed their

distribution by about two weeks following approval by the USIB. This material was included to meet the legitimate requests of some users for more of the background data and the rationales behind major estimative judgments. But we may have overreacted to those requests. We have produced voluminous estimates filled with detailed information and technical data, much of which has little relevance to the key intelligence issues on which the estimates should focus.

25X1 10. [ ] Another serious drawback to such highly detailed estimates is quick obsolescence. The more detailed the estimate, the more quickly new information causes it to be out of date. Most of the important judgments on Soviet military can be made in broad (but not vague) terms with reasonable confidence that they will hold up for the period between estimates.

25X1 11. [ ] In my view, the problems noted above stem not so much from the quantity of detail as how it is handled. Much can be done to ease these problems by revising the format of the military NIEs and by changing the methods of production and coordination. At ONE's request, the question of format was discussed at the 29 March meeting on the estimates schedule. On my instructions, the DIA representative tabled the following propositions:

a. Basic intelligence--technical data and detailed order-of-battle information--that does not relate directly to key issues should be relegated to a supplementary document. This document like the DIPP would consist largely of tables, but it could also briefly set forth evidence and rationale as required to support its judgments.

b. Most of the data in the supplement would be non-controversial, but it would note any differing views of the USIB agencies or the Services.

c. The document would be maintained in a loose-leaf format, and be updated periodically (every three or four months) by the USIB and Service representatives to reflect new evidence and analysis.

d. Formal USIB consideration would not be required. USIB approval of the basic document and of the periodic revisions could be accomplished telephonically as was done with the NIPP and is now done with the President's Quarterly Report.

25X1 12. ☐ The 29 March meeting ended inconclusively. The Chairman, Mr. Abbot Smith, announced that Mr. Kissinger's opinion would be solicited before a final decision on format was reached. I would recommend that other major consumers be circularized as well and that they be apprised of the DIA proposals as a possible alternative to the present system.

25X1 13. ☐ In addition to facilitating coordination, the change in format proposed by DIA would ensure that the NIEs reflect new evidence and analysis and, more important, that they are focused more sharply upon matters of major concern. If it is adopted, I would propose that in addition to drafting the major military NIEs, DIA produce and maintain the new, supplementary document, since it would have to move in tandem with the NIEs. Because this would be an experimental undertaking, I would plan to work very closely with our major consumers in drafting the NIEs and in the related task of producing the supplement.

25X1 14. ☐ I shall be most interested in your reaction to these proposals.

*D. V. Bennett*

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Director